

Exhibit A

Business

Meat Plants to Reopen in 'Days Not Weeks,' USDA Boss Says

By [Mike Dorning](#)

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- ▶ Perdue predicts output gap to narrow to 10% to 15% in 10 days
- ▶ Says USDA has power to force plants to open under Trump order



Sony Perdue *Photographer: Oliver Contreras/Sipa/Bloomberg*

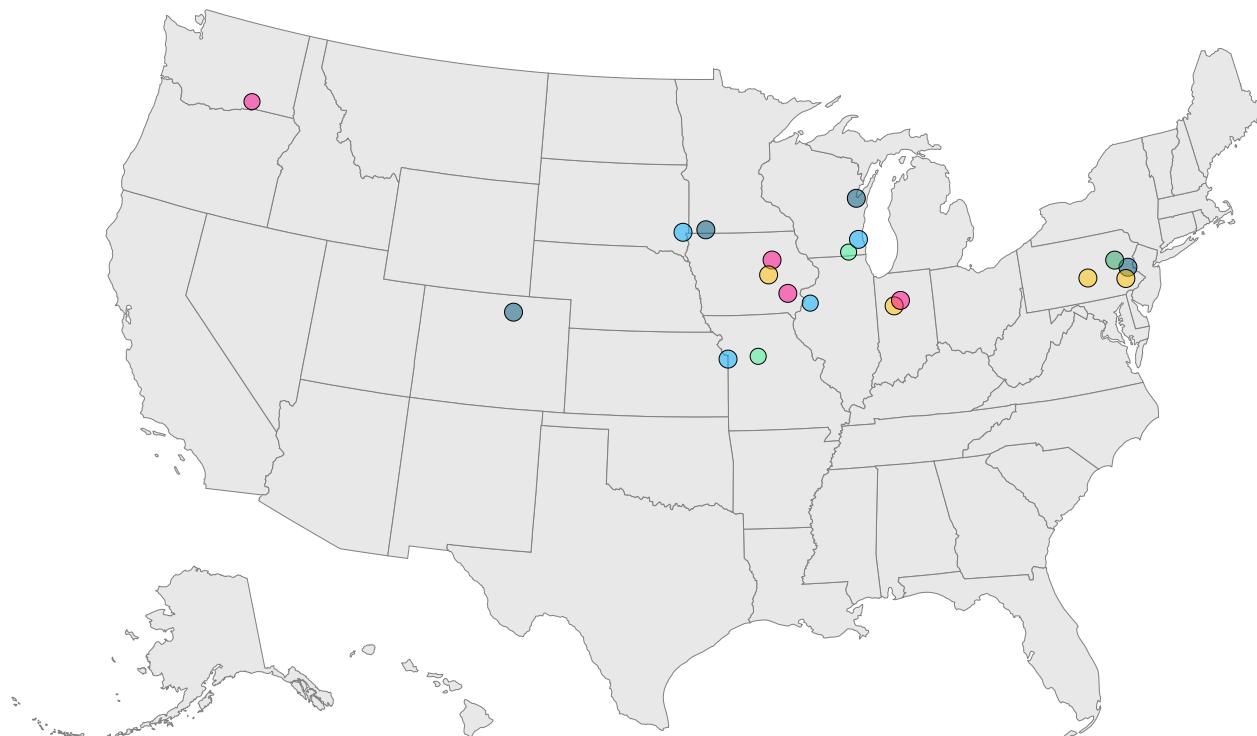
Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said he expects meatpacking plants to reopen in “days not weeks” under President Donald Trump’s executive order invoking the Defense Production Act.

Slaughterhouse workers should begin receiving more protective gear and access to coronavirus testing “virtually immediately,” Perdue said Thursday in a telephone interview. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has “already begun” working on orders to get them filled on a priority basis by vendors similar to health care workers, he said.

Meat Plant Closures

U.S. processing plants shuttered due to the pandemic

Cargill Conagra JBS Smithfield Foods
Tyson Foods Other



Source: Bloomberg News

The USDA has been tapped to take the lead in assuring meat-processing facilities stay open under the executive order issued Tuesday. The nation's food-supply chain has fallen apart as a wave of outbreaks shutters slaughterhouses across the U.S., heightening the prospect that pork, beef and chicken may go missing from the shelves at grocery stores.

Perdue said he expects the national shortfall in meat production, which he estimates is currently 20% to 30%, to be narrowed to "10% to 15% within a week to 10 days."

In many cases, even as plants reopen, they won't be operating at the same capacity because of safety measures to control the spread of virus, Perdue said.

"There will be some less production, some inefficiency based on line speeds, some employees

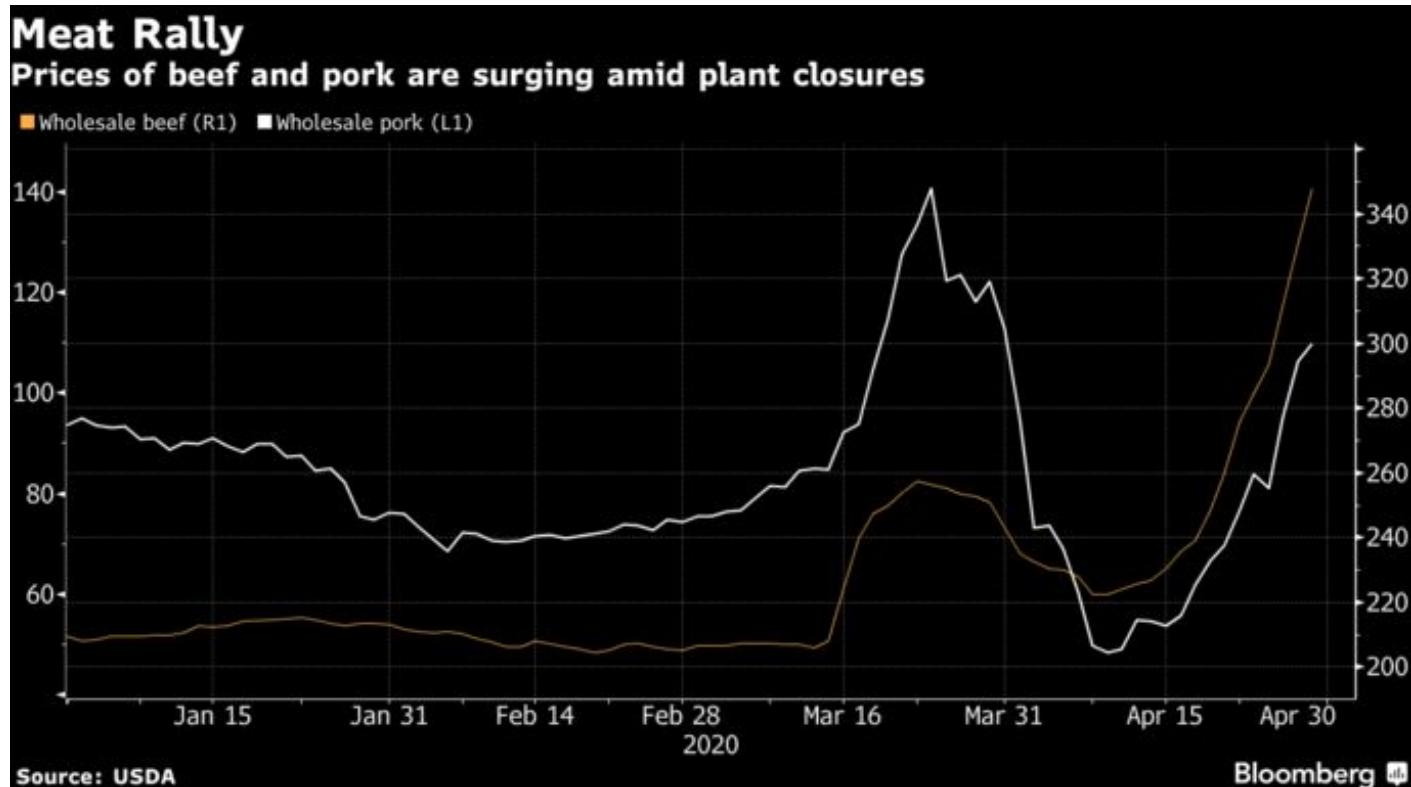
that will not be able to come back to work," Perdue said.

The USDA will have the legal power to force meat producers to reopen slaughterhouses under the Trump order but doesn't anticipate using it, Perdue said. The department will work collaboratively with companies and state and local officials to set safety standards based on guidelines for workers that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Occupational Safety and Health Administration released, he said.

"Worker health and safety is the first priority here," Perdue said. "We want to assure the workers and the community of their safety."

The USDA said Wednesday it will ask meat processors to submit written plans to safely operate packing plants and review them in consultation with local officials.

Trump's executive order won't remove legal liability from meat companies for coronavirus safety lawsuits but along with the CDC guidelines will give them "a defensible answer" should they be sued as long as they follow the guidance, Perdue said.



About a dozen plants have shut this month because of outbreaks among employees jammed together on processing lines. The closures have prompted farmers to start culling hogs that have nowhere to go for pork processing.

One day after Trump's order, another slaughterhouse shut. Tyson Foods Inc., the biggest U.S. meat processor, said late Wednesday it was idling a beef facility in Nebraska for four days.

Twenty workers from meatpacking and food-processing plants have died, and at least 6,500 have been directly affected by the coronavirus, according to the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, the largest private sector union.

Trump said Wednesday that his administration is preparing a report on how to protect workers.

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